DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 735 CG 017 863

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TITLE Attributional Counseling for Depression: Effects of Characterological versus External Interpretations.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (92nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 24-28, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attribution Theory; College Students; *Counseling; *Counseling Effectiveness; Counseling Techniques; Counselor Client Relationship; *Depression (Psychology); Feedback; Higher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Interpretation

ABSTRACT

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Attributional Counseling for Depression: Effects of Characterological Versus External Interpretations

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Running head: ATTRIBUTIONAL COUNSELING

This paper was completed as part of the first author's Master's thesis under the direction of the second author. The authors would like to thank Charles D. Claiborn, Mark Lukin, Michael Stinsen, Steve Thyberg, and John Olson for helping with the study.

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CG 017863

Abstract

The content of attributional interpretations and their discrepancy from the attributional styles of subjects were manipulated in order to investigate the importance of these variables to the effectiveness of interpretation. Thirty-nine subjects experiencing problematic negative emotions and exhibiting either characterological or external attributional styles were given brief counseling that included either characterological or external interpretations. The discrepancy variable was formed by matching subject attributional styles with interpretation content. Results indicated that interpretation discrepancy was irrelevant to change in subjects' negative emotions, attributional styles, and problem-related attributions. Change on the internality dimension of subjects' problem-related attributions was partly due to interpretation content ($p < .05$). Subjects' negative emotions improved in all treatment conditions (p .C001). Subjects' characterological attributional styles became less stable after receiving interpretations ($p < .05$), and in all conditions, subjects' attributional styles became less global ($p < .05$). Implications for the use of interpretation in counseling are discussed.

Attributional Counseling for Depression: Effects of Characterological Versus External Interpretations

Many theorists (Claiborn, 1982; Frank, 1973; Levy, 1963; Strong & Matross, 1973) have stressed the importance of interpretation in the interpersonal influence models of counseling. Through the years, interpretation has been a difficult concept to define. Ivey and Authier (1978) have defined interpretation in terms of its form. To them, interpretation is a verbal statement in which the counselor redefines the problem according to his or her particular theory. Others have noted that anecdotes (Nydes, 1966), metaphors (Reider, 1972), questions (Frank & Sweetland, 1962), reflections (Gendlin, 1968), and restatements (Eissler, 1958) can be used as forms of interpretation. Claiborn (1982) suggested that the form an interpretation takes is an important variable contributing to its effects, but that using this definition alone creates a host of problems.

The content of interpretation has also been examined in an attempt to more clearly define it. The content is based on the particular theoretical orientation that the counselor is working from in order to understand the client (Claiborn, 1982). The use of content to define interpretation is questioned though, for researchers (e.g., Bergin & Lambert, 1978; Claiborn, 1982) have noted little support for the

superiority of one theory over any other in effecting client change.

As an alternative to defining interpretation in terms of form or content, Levy (1963) has conceptualized interpretation as a "discrepancy" between the client's point of view and that presented to him or her, or "pitting one language system, the interpreter's, against another, the patient's" (p. 28).

Levy (1963) further clarified this process by offering two aspects of psychological interpretation. First, the semantic aspect of interpretation simply describes or translates the information given by the client in terms of the "language" or theoretical orientation of the interpreter. The interpreter adds nothing to the situation except the new language. Second, the propositional aspect of interpretation provides relational statements, which are usually derived from a particular theory, among experiential data supplied by the client. These either imply or directly assert a causal relationship between events (Claiborn, 1982), and result in client change through interpersonal influence processes.

The content and discrepancy models of change are two of the more popular ways to understand the function of interpretation in the change process. As noted earlier, the content model assumes that what is contained in the counselor's interpretation has an effect on change.

Although attribution theory (Kelly & Michela, 1980) has provided a more fertile testing ground for investigating the importance of content in interpretation, the research has generally provided little support for such a model.

On the other hand, the discrepancy model has received stronger support (e.g., Hoffman & Teglasi, 1982; Strong, Wambach, Lopez, & Cooper, 1979). Again, this model assumes that change is brought about through the counselor presenting the client with discrepant communications. Discrepant communications are those that are different from the client's point of view and fall on a continuum from congruent (i.e., slightly discrepant) to highly discrepant. In giving the client a discrepant interpretation, it is hoped that he or she will change toward this viewpoint. Content is irrelevant is this process.

Claiborn and Dowd (1983) tested both interpretation content and discrepancy hypotheses in a study of brief counseling for negative emotions. Clients with negative emotions and exhibiting either behavioral or characterological attributional styles were given brief counseling that included receiving either behavioral or characterological interpretations (interpretation content). In all four combinations, the discrepancy variable was formed by matching the clients' attributional styles with the two types of interpretation (i.e., behavioral and characterological). Clients received two 30-minute counseling interviews in which problems were explored and

the appropriate interpretations made. Support for the content hypothesis would result from a greater decrease in negative emotions for clients receiving behavioral interpretations than for those receiving characterological interpretations. Results from the experiment gave no support for the content hypothesis. Clients' negative emotions improved considerably regardless of the interpretation content they received from the counselor. Support for the discrepancy hypothesis would come about if those interpretations congruent with or discrepant from the clients' attributional styles resulted in a decrease in negative emotions. The discrepancy hypothesis fared slightly better, for positive change occurred in clients who received interpretations congruent (i.e., less discrepant) with, as opposed to those receiving interpretations discrepant from, their particular attributional style. More specifically, clients with characterological styles showed a decrease in the stability of their attributions (a more healthy style) after receiving characterological interpretations. This contradicted predictions of the content hypothesis for the characterological interpretations contained stable attributions, which are thought to be less healthy. No such change was noted for clients having a behavioral attributional style and receiving behavioral interpretations.

In discussing results concerning the content

hypothesis, Claiborn and Dowd (1983) suggested that:

> Interpretation content had no differential effect on the dimensions of clients' attributional styles or of their problem-related attributions, even though interpretation content explicitly varied along the dimensions of stability and globality. This raises the possibility that the two kinds of interpretation may not have been sufficiently distinct or attributionally explicit, from the client's point of view. (p. 18)

Whereas other research (Claiborn et al., 1981; Forsyth & Forsyth, 1982) has demonstrated the superiority of the discrepancy hypothesis, weak support was given for it in the Claiborn and Dowd (1983) study. The authors suggested that this may be due to the selection of different content dimensions (i.e., behavioral and characterological attributional styles) than other research investigating discrepancy. With this, they noted that "continued research aimed at clarifying the role of discrepancy in interpretation should attend carefully to the nature and size of discrepancy" (p. 21).

These suggestions were taken into consideration in the present study. This included making the two kinds of attributional interpretations more distinct. This was accomplished by using the characterological and external attributional styles as opposed to the characterological and behavioral styles used by Claiborn and Dowd (1983).

Peterson, Schwartz, and Seligman (1981) indicated some evidence that there is a greater difference between the external and characterological types than between the behavioral and characterological attributional styles. Even with these changes, it was hypothesized that interpretations congruent with subject attributional styles would produce greater improvement than attributionally discrepant interpretations, regardless of content.

As noted earlier, attribution theory has provided a fertile testing ground for examining the importance of content in interpretation. Attribution theory is the study of the perceived causes of actions or behaviors (Kelly & Michela, 1980). Attributional causation has been classified according to three dimensions. Weiner et al. (1971) have proposed that causes be though of in terms of stability and locus; more specifically, stability over time and locus defined by either internal or external causation. Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978) have proposed a third dimension - globality, which refers to causes as being present across all situations or only certain ones.

In their reformulated learned helplessness theory, Abramson et al. (1978) noted that certain combinations of these three dimensions may result in various motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits. More specifically, they indicated that attributing failure to internal, stable, and global factors should lead to general and chronic

helplessness with low self-esteem. This is referred to as "personal helplessness" and is thought to be more deleterious than "universal helplessness," in which failure is attributed to external causes that neither the person nor others can control. Universal helplessness does not result in lowered self-esteem, which is an important symptom of depression (Beck, 1967, 1976; Bibring, 1953; Freud, 1917/1957).

Janoff-Bulman (1979) distinguished between two types of self-blame - behavioral and characterological. Behavioral self-blame involves making internal, specific, and unstable attributions toward the cause of a negative event, whereas characterological self-blame involves making attributions of an internal, stable, and global nature. The characterological self-blame is more deleterious for it is esteem related and involves making attributions about one's character.

Peterson, Schwartz, and Seligman (1981) also found these attributional styles for depressed and non-depressed subjects. In addition, they noted that depressive symptoms were not correlated with making external attributions toward negative events. Somewhat in contrast, Hammen, Krantz, and Cochran (1981) found that internal, stable, and global attributions about the cause of a negative event was not associated with depression. Instead, they noted that low controllability and globality were.

In a non-counseling analogue, Altmaier, Leary, Forsyth, and Ansel (1979) found that directing an individual's attributional focus from an internal to an external source resulted in greater self-acceptance following a negative interpersonal evaluation. Forsyth and Forsyth (1982) also noted that giving information about the external cause of a negative event produced positive affective reactions in certain types of individuals.

Although the exact role that the external attributional dimension plays in depression and its treatment is unknown, it was hypothesized that external interpretations would produce greater improvement than interpretations advocating characterological attributions.

The content and discrepancy hypotheses were tested in a study of brief counseling for negative emotions. The study was conducted according to a 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design. The first variable was subject attributional style, which was either characterological or external. The second variable was interpretation content. Again, these consisted of either characterological or external interpretations. Time was the third variable in the design, and consisted of a pretest and a posttest. Subjects exhibiting either characterological or external attributional styles were given brief counseling that contained either characterological or external interpretations (interpretation content). Crossing the two kinds of subject

attributional styles with two kinds of interpretation content to make two congruent and two discrepant conditions determined the interpretation discrepancy. Changes in subjects' attributional styles, particular problem-related attributions, and negative emotions were then assessed.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 39 undergraduate college students (26 females; 13 males) recruited through introductory educational psychology courses. They received course credit for participation. Inclusion criteria required that subjects: (a) currently were experiencing problematic negative emotions (i.e., feeling depressed or discouraged), as might result from a recent failure, loss, or rejection; (b) scored in the mildly or moderately depressed range on the Beck Depression Inventory; and (c) exhibited either a characterological (internal, stable, global) or external (external, stable, or global) attributional style for bad outcomes on the Attributional Style Questionnaire.

Counselors

The counselors in the study were three male graduate-level counseling psychology students. All of the counselors were near completion of their master's program and were experienced in counseling. They were unfamiliar with the purpose of the study. Over a 2-week period, the counselors rehearsed each of the standardized interview

formats until they could reliably follow them and deliver the interpretations verbatim. During the interviews, the counselors presented themselves as being expert and attractive. To insure that they conducted the interview according to, cue sheets were used and notes were occasionally taken in order to remember relevant subject information, which could be used to back up the interpretations. The interpretations were read so as to mark them from the rest of the interview.

Independent Variables

The two independent variables manipulated in this study were subject attributional style and interpretation content.

Subject attributional style. Attributional style refers to a relatively stable, yet modifiable pattern or way of attributing causes to events. There were two types of subject attributional styles used in this study. The first consisted of a characterological attributional style, the second, an external attributional style. A median split of the internal-external score on the Attributional Style Questionnaire placed subjects into either characterological or external attributional style groups. This median split fell somewhat above the subscale midpoint of 24. As a result, scores in the external group ranged from 16 to 29 on this dimension, making them slightly on the characterological side. In addition, stability and globality scores of these individuals needed to be above the

subscale midpoint to be included in these two groups.

Interpretation content. There were two types of interpretation that a counselor could give during the interview, attributing the subject's negative emotions to either characterological or external causes. Characterological interpretations were operationalized according to the guidelines of Peterson et al. (1981) and are similar to those used by Claiborn and Dowd (1983). The interpretations stressed that the personality traits of the subject were stable over time and global across situations. An example of a characterological interpretation is: "The way you have been describing yourself tells me that you are invariably a (global, stable trait) sort of person. This can cause you to feel (negative emotion)."

The external interpretations were operationalized according to Abramson et al. (1978), except for a minor modification of the global dimension. Rather than a reference to "relevant" others, this interpretation substituted others who would be involved in the many situations described by the subject. The emphasis of the external interpretations was on the uncontrollability of outcomes over time and across different situations. An example of an external interpretation is: "You invariably feel (negative emotion) when (examples of a variety of situations) because you could do nothing about it. Remember, because these events are uncontrollable neither

you nor anyone else could bring about the desired outcome. The outcome is caused by the situation."

The counseling involved a 30-minute interview in which two interpretations and a summary interpretation were delivered. The counselor explored the subject's problems for 15 minutes and then delivered the interpretations approximately 5 minutes apart. Both scripts were constructed so as to credibly simulate a counseling session and are similar to those used by Claiborn and Dowd (1983).

Dependent Measures

The present study used three measures in order to indicate any changes brought about as a result of counseling.

Beck Depression Inventory. The BDI (Beck 1967) was used to assess the level of negative affect experienced by the subjects. This instrument required that the subject report the degree to which 21 symptoms have been present in the past week. A subject's score can range from 0 to 64, with the latter being most severe. Beck developed the inventory to be a "standardized, consistent measure" of depth of depression. Internal consistency for the inventory ranges from .31 to .68. Split-half reliability is reported as being between .86 (Pearson r) and .93 (Spearman-Brown). Beck suggested that test-retest and interrater reliability are not appropriate due to the memory factor over a short period of time and the fluctuations in the intensity of

depression over a long interval. Metcalf and Goldman (1965) have noted correlations of .61 between the inventory and clinical ratings. It is also noted by Beck that in 28 of 33 cases (85%), the inventory correctly predicted minor changes in the depth of depression.

Attributional Style Questionnaire. The ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982) was used to assess the general attributional style of the subjects. The ASQ measures individual differences in atributional style along the dimensions of internal-external, unstable-stable, and specific-global. The internal-external dimension refers to the extent to which events are caused be the person or something about the situation. Unstable-stable refers to whether causes are short-lived or remain over time, while the specific-global dimension is the extent to which the causes are restricted to a narrow range of situations or across a broad range of situations. The questionnaire asks the individual to list the major cause of 12 hypothetical events, six with good and six with bad outcomes. Following each event, the individual is asked to rate the cause on the three before-mentioned attributional dimensions along 7-point continuua. Only the six subscales with the bad outcomes were used for scoring due to their being more directly related to problematic negative emotions (Peterson et al., 1981). Thus, scores on each dimension ranged from 6 to 42. Using Cronbach's (1951) alpha, Peterson et al. (1982) determined the internal

consistencies for bad-event items to be .46 (internality), .59 (stability), and .69 (globality). Five-week test-retest correlations for the attributional dimensions ranged between r = .57 and .69 (Peterson et al., 1982). Peterson et al. (1982) noted that scores on this measure correlate positively with the attributions made by individuals for significant life events. Also, they reported that a style of attributing bad outcomes to internal, stable, and global causes was associated with depressive symptoms in college students.

Individualized Attributional Style Questionnaire. The ASQ-I was the third dependent measure used in this study. It was designed by Claiborn and Dowd (1983) for the purpose of assessing subjects' attributions regarding their problematic negative emotions. The ASQ-I was included as a dependent measure so as to determine if changes in general attributional style, measure by the ASQ, would correspond to changes in the attributions subjects made about their specific problems. Although Peterson et al. (1982) predicted that this would be the case, Claiborn and Dowd found no support for this. The ASQ-I is similar to the ASQ in format except that only three events are measured. Subjects were asked to write in three negative-outcome events, which were related to their specific problems. Again, subjects were asked to supply information concerning the major causes of these negative outcomes, and to rate the

internality, stability, and globality dimensions along 7-point continuua. Scores for each dimension ranged from 3 to 21. Claiborn and Dowd found low to moderate correlations ($.20 < r < .45$) between comparable subscales of the ASQ and ASQ-I, and suggested that these instruments measure different things (i.e., a general style versus a specific pattern for attributing causes to events).

Manipulation check. A manipulation check was also done in order to insure that subjects accurately perceived the appropriate interpretations. Two different forms were used: (a) Form 1 asked the subjects to indicate as many things that they could remember that the counselor said regarding their negative emotions. (b) Form 2 listed six statements concerning negative emotions, and asked the subject to check those statements that generally summarized what the counselor said about the cause of their negative emotions. Both forms were used to validate what interpretation the subject perceived himself or herself receiving from the counselor.

Procedure

The study was conducted in 2 weeks. A week before the interview, potential subjects completed the BDI, ASQ, and ASQ-I. Those meeting the inclusion criteria were scheduled for an interview the following week. Subjects in each attributional style group were randomly assigned to a treatment that was either attributionally congruent with or

discrepant from their own attributional styles. This assignment constituted the manipulation of discrepancy. Counselors were distributed equally among all conditions such that each saw an equal number of subjects in all conditions. Following the interview, subjects again completed the BDI, ASQ, and ASQ-I. The ASQ-I posttest contained the same three events that the subjects had indicated on the pretest. After completing these, the subjects were thoroughly debriefed about the nature of the study, and those requesting further counseling were allowed to do so.

Data Analysis

Scores from the BDI and subscales of the ASQ and ASQ-I were analyzed with separate three-way ANOVAs, with subject attributional styles and interpretation content as the between-subjects variable and time of testing a within-subjects variable. Support for the content hypothesis would result from significant Interpretation Content X Time interactions, with external interpretations producing greater improvement than characterological interpretations. Significant Subject Attributional Styles X Interpretation Content X Time interactions, with improvement occurring more for the congruent conditions as opposed to the discrepant conditions, would support the discrepancy hypothesis. A reduction in score on the BDI, the subscale scores on the ASQ and ASQ-I would indicate movement away

from a characterological style and thus improvement.

Results

Means and standard deviations for the BDI, and subscales of the ASQ and ASQ-I are shown in Table 1 by independent variable and time of testing. The ANOVA of BDI scores yielded a significant main effect for time, $F(1,35) = 22.56$, $p < .0001$, indicating that in all four conditions, subjects' negative emotions improved from pretest ($M = 15.78$) to posttest ($M = 10.59$). No other significant differences occurred on this measure.

Insert Table 1 about here

There was an expected main effect on the internal subscale of the ASQ, $F(1,35) = 31.89$, $p < .0001$. This was produced by the median split on that dimension, placing subjects into either a characterological or external attributional style group. There were no other significant differences on the internality subscale of the ASQ. On the internality subscale of the ASQ-I, there was a significant Interpretation Content X Time interaction, $F(1,35) = 4.87$, $p < .05$. Simple effects follow-ups showed that subjects who received external interpretations did become more external (less internal) in orientation, $F(1,35) = 4.79$. $p < .05$, from pretest ($M = 15.2$) to posttest ($M = 12.65$), while those that

received characterological interpretations showed no significant differences, $F(1,35) = .94$, $p > .05$. There was also a significant Subject Attributional Style X Interpretation Content interaction, $F(1,35) = 5.54$, $p < .05$. This effect was not over time, so it may be due to pretest differences among the four conditions. No other significant differences were noted.

On the stability subscale of the ASQ, there was a significant Subject Attributional Style X Time interaction, $F(1,35) = 5.84$, $p < .05$. Simple effects follow-ups indicated that after receiving interpretations, subjects with characterological attributional styles showed a significant ($F(1,35) = 8.20$, $p < .01$) decrease in the stability of their styles for bad outcomes from pretest ($M = 29.95$) to posttest ($M = 26.60$), while those with external attributional styles did not significantly change after counseling, $F(1,35) = .37$, $p > .05$. There were no other significant differences on this measure or on the stability subscale of the ASQ-I.

On the globality subscale of the ASQ, there was a significant main effect for time, $F(1,35) = 6.84$, $p < .05$, indicating that in all four conditions, subjects' globality scores decreased from pretest ($M = 30.44$) to posttest ($M = 28.18$). No other significant differences were found on this measure or on the globality subscale of the ASQ-I.

A manipulation check was done in order to determine whether subjects perceived themselves receiving the interpretations that they were intended to receive. In 92% of the cases, subjects correctly indicated that they received interpretations that the experimenter and counselor had intended for them.

Discussion

Whereas the content hypothesis suggested that those interpretations containing external attributions would result in greater subject improvement than those containing characterological attributions, the discrepancy hypothesis predicted that interpretations congruent with subjects' attributional styles would result in greater subject change than discrepant interpretations. Because the literature (e.g., Hoffman & Teglasi, 1982; Strong et al., 1979) has provided little support for the content hypothesis, it was predicted from previous research (e.g., Claiborn et al., 1983; Claiborn & Dowd, 1983; Claiborn et al., 1981; Forsyth & Forsyth, 1982) that the present study would lend support for the discrepancy hypothesis.

The results from this study did not support the discrepancy hypothesis. Subjects' negative emotions improved regardless of whether they received interpretations congruent with or discrepant from their attributional styles. These findings contrdict both the prediction of this study and results obtained from previous research

(Claiborn et al., 1983; Claiborn & Dowd, 1983; Claiborn et al., 1981; Forsyth & Forsyth, 1982) that moderately discrepant interpretations are more effective in bringing about subject change than highly discrepant interpretations. Findings from the present study are more in line with research (e.g., Claiborn & Dowd, 1983) using similar content variables. These authors noted only slight support for the discrepancy hypothesis.

Claiborn's (1982) content hypothesis received some support in this study. Although clear support was not provided, for not three-way interactions were significant, a significant two-way interaction on the internality subscale of the ASQ-I indicated that subjects who received external interpretations became more external (less internal), whereas those who received characterological interpretations showed no significant change. Peterson et al. (1981) have indicated that the external attributional style is incompatible with depression. This study's finding contradicts previous research that found content to be irrelevant to the function of interpretation (Claiborn et al., 1983; Claiborn & Dowd, 1983; Hoffman & Teglasi, 1982; Strong et al., 1979).

Claiborn and Dowd (1983) suggested that the characterological and behavioral interpretations may not have beenexplicit enough to provide support for the content hypothesis. The present study made the interpretation

content more distinct by using characterological and external interpretations. By receiving interpretations that varied along only the internal-external dimension, subjects were given information in which they could blame themselves (characterological attributional style) or the situation (external attributional style) for their negative emotions.

Abramson et al. (1978) noted that two types of helplessness results from characterological and external attributions for failure - "personal helplessness" and "universal helplessness," respectively. Whereas in personal helplessness, the individual believes the appropriate outcome is not in his or her repertoire but is in the repertoire of relevant others, universally helpless individuals believe that the appropriate outcome in not in theirs' or relevant others' repertoires. Results from this study would appear to support the notion that universal helplessness is a more healthy or less detremental style, whereas personal helplessness may result in lowered self-esteem (Abramson, 1977). It would appear that although both personal and universal helplessness interpretations forward the idea of the uncontrollability of negative events, universal helplessness appears to be more palatable to the individual for relevant others are in the same situation as they are.

In examining the reason for this, several authors (Clark & Clark, 1939; Festinger, 1954; Morse & Gergen, 1970;

Rosenberg, 1965) have suggested that a major determinant of attitudes toward the self is comparison to others. By giving subjects external interpretations, which stressed the uncontrollability for them and others in similar situations, the subjects may have felt that they were "in the same boat" as others, and thus their self-evaluations were less negative (i.e., more external). Wortman and Dintzer (1978) suggested that such a process may be possible. They indicated that the attributions a person made about uncontrollable events may be alterable through having them interact with similar others. Wortman and Dintzer noted that "associating with similar others can help victims to realize that much of what they are experiencing is a normal consequence of the life crises with which they are faced and is not the result of their own inadequacies" (p. 88). Thus, making this kind of attribution seems beneficial for it does not result in lowered self-esteem (Abramson, 1977), which is a hallmark of depression (Beck, 1967, 1976; Bibring, 1953; Freud, 1917/1957).

As noted, the discrepancy hypothesis received no support, while the content hypothesis received only slight support. Negative emotions improved considerably regardless

of the interpretation received by the subject. This is consistent with similar (Beck & Strong, 1982; Claiborn et al., 1983; Claiborn & Dowd, 1983), which has shown the value of interpretation in lessening subjects' negative emotions. Whereas the improvement in negative emotions in these studies were measured after two counseling interviews, it is somewhat surprising that such dramatic effects were obtained in the present study after only one counseling interview. Relationship factors may have played a part in the positive change seen in subjects, but it appears that the interpretations made during the counseling interview were instrumental in contributing to subject improvement. As Claiborn and Dowd (1983) suggested, the interpretations presented the subjects with a different way of looking at their problems with negative emotions; more specifically, the causes of these negative emotions and how to "reconstrue" these to a more healthy style.

Further evidence for such effects occurred on various attributional dimensions as measured on the ASQ. After receiving interpretations, subjects with characterological attributional styles showed significantly lower stability of their attributional styles for negative events. Those subjects with an external attributional style showed no such decrease in stability. This shift to an unstable style is seen as healthy for these individuals perceive the causes of their negative emotions as more variable over time and thus

these causes may not be present in the future. Globality scores also decreased in all groups after receiving interpretations. This move to a more healthy specific attributional style may have resulted from the discussion during counseling of specific events, which may have lead to the subjects' negative emotions. Again, the interpretations may have prompted the subjects to reconstrue the causes of their negative emotions to a more healthy style.

Upon examining changes in means across all four groups, it was found that decreases on the internality, stability, and globality subscales of the ASQ corresponded to decreases on the same subscale dimensions of the ASQ-I. This is in contrast to Claiborn and Dowd (1983) who noted different change patterns for the ASQ and ASQ-I subscales. Whereas the present data indicate that the ASQ and ASQ-I measure similar things, correlations between comparable subscales of these two questionnaires were low to moderate at pretest ($.16 < r_s < .28$) and posttest ($.10 < r_s < .33$). Thus, mixed findings neither support nor challenge claims that attributional style should be predictive of attributions regarding paricular events.

One of the more important implications of this study was that some support was given for Claiborn's (1982) content hypothesis of interpretation. Although slight, this is in contrast to previous research (Claiborn et al., 1983; Claiborn & Dowd, 1983; Claiborn et al., 1981; Forsyth &

Forsyth, 1982), which has supported the discrepancy hypothesis. Perhaps more clear effects were not seen due to the use of only one counseling interview as opposed to two interviews. It is suggested that future research on interpretation use two counseling interviews so as to allow time for the subject to conceptualize the information received and reconstrue possible causes for their negative emotions.

Another important inplication of this study concerns the value of making external attributional interpretations in counseling. Whereas Abramson et al. (1978) suggested that making external attributions for uncontrollable negative events leads to universal helplessness, this study noted the beneficial effects of making this type of interpretation to subjects having both characterological and external attributional styles. It would appear that Wortman and Dintzer (1978) were somewhat correct when they predicted that associating with similar others who had experienced uncontrollable negative events would be helpful in altering the unhealthy attributions a person made about these. From this research, it seems that actual contact with similar others might not be necessary, but only the suggestion (or interpretation) that others in the same situation would have acted similarly to the client. By seeing that they are similar to others, the client may evaluate himself or herself more positively as opposed to either blaming oneself

or believing that they alone were condemned by chance, fate, or God. Further research should focus on the effects of making external interpretations that contain unstable and specific dimensions, along with the effects of external interpretations for various types of client problems. In addition, the inclusion of a no-interpretation control group could determine the effects of any interpretation on client change. These suggestions would clarify both interpretation and the role that external attributions play in negative emotions.

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TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE BDI, ASQ, AND ASQ-I BY INDEPENDENT VARIABLE AND TIME OF TESTING

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE[a] AND TIME	DEPENDENT MEASURE: BDI			ASQ: INTERNALITY		ASQ: STABILITY		ASQ: GLOBALITY		ASQ-I: INTERNALITY		ASQ-I: STABILITY		ASQ-I: GLOBALITY	
	n	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
EXTERNAL-															
EXTERNAL	10														
PRE		15.0	8.9	25.4	3.1	27.7	5.0	28.4	4.3	15.0	4.3	16.0	2.2	16.9	2.8
POST		9.5	6.3	24.3	5.7	27.7	4.4	29.2	5.5	14.0	3.2	14.3	2.3	14.5	3.5
EXTERNAL-															
CHAR.	10														
PRE		13.6	7.6	23.7	5.1	28.2	2.7	31.4	3.7	10.5	4.0	14.6	2.9	16.2	3.8
POST		8.2	5.7	24.9	5.4	29.2	4.2	28.4	5.3	12.0	3.2	14.2	2.5	14.2	3.6
CHAR.-															
CHAR.	9														
PRE		19.0	8.7	33.8	4.1	29.1	3.1	33.0	5.2	14.3	4.2	14.4	3.8	14.9	3.4
POST		16.1	9.3	30.6	5.3	28.0	4.0	29.2	5.7	15.1	3.6	14.7	2.9	13.6	4.4
CHAR.-															
EXTERNAL	10														
PRE		15.8	5.6	34.4	4.5	28.8	3.9	29.2	5.1	15.4	4.3	15.0	3.1	14.3	4.2
POST		9.1	7.1	29.9	7.1	25.2	2.4	26.0	3.6	11.3	5.0	12.6	3.2	14.9	4.4

NOTE: BDI SCALE RANGE IS 0-63; ASQ SUBSCALE RANGE IS 6-42; ASQ-I SUBSCALE RANGE IS 3-21

[a]CLIENT BELIEF VARIABLE IS LISTED FIRST AND THE INTERPRETATION CONTENT VARIABLE IS SECOND.

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